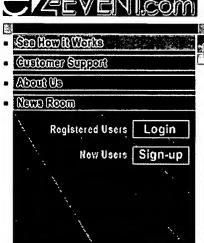
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L7	678	request\$3 near2 (quote\$2 or proposal\$2)	USPAT; EPO; JPO; DERWENT; IBM_TDB	OR	OFF	2005/01/11 14:08
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Corporate appetite for entertaining feeds a new Web-based event planning service April 19, 2001

Joe Zlomek



This article appeared on page 15 in the April 2001 issue of the "Technology Times"

Although much of Corporate America bills itself as lean and mean, the average business executive rarely passes up a decent dinner. Of the \$157 billion spent annually on travel and entertainment, a full 10 percent pays for meals; often at fine restaurants, often involving parties of 10 or more.

#### Greg Truitt wants a piece of that pie.

Truitt is the CEO of ez-Event.com, a Web-based event planning service and software company based in Philadelphia His firm serves as a middleman between business event planners - who schedule everything from intimate sales meetings to huge-hall conventions - and restaurant owners who hunger for what Truitt calls the "very lucrative" corporate dining trade.

#### Competitive bids

ez-Event matches those who want to throw a party with those who have thrown plenty. Its patented software can help planners set an event budget, book reservations, make menu selections (wine and dessert included), even choose tablecloth colors. Then it e-mails the request out to restaurant partners, who bid competitively for the business. Clients can rely on the process to speed up scheduling and control costs. Restaurant owners expect it to bring in business they might not otherwise capture. And ez-Event makes its money by collecting subscription fees from member restaurants.

The idea grew out of an effort by Truitt and his colleagues to profit from the wealth of public and private events that accompanied the 2000 Republican National Convention in Philadelphia. They sold 400 businesses a presence on the Web and marketed the site to out-of-town event planners, who welcomed some hand-holding and helpful direction.

The success of that effort, and nine hard months of application development, led to ez-Event.

#### Mission critical

The company has just completed a seven-month test of its system involving six corporate clients and more than 80 restaurants in the Philadelphia area. Now ez-Event intends to extend coverage to the corporate dining scenes in New York, Washington D.C. and Baltimore as well.

Pharmaceutical manufacturers are among the first expressing interest in ez-Event, Truitt says. The software can track the amount spent per head per event. That's particularly helpful to drug makers, who want to correlate the amount paid to introduce a new medicine to doctors, with the number of prescriptions those doctors write.

Industry estimates show that pharmaceuticals alone spent about \$2 billion last year wining and dining physicians. The practice is known as "detailing doctors:" serving up a good meal while giving them the details of the latest breakthroughs at the research labs. "For firms that need to know if such investments are effective," Truitt says, exevent "becomes a mission-critical application for data collection."

For more information, visit ez-Event.com or call 215-508-4490.

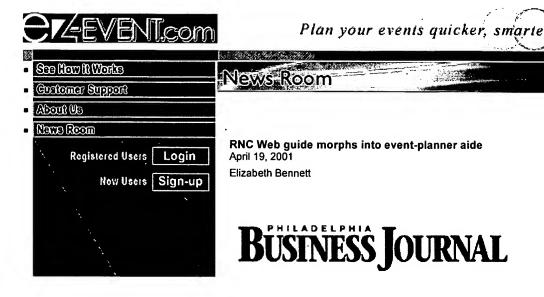
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This article appeared in the Philadelphia Business Journal Friday, April 13-21, 2001 (pp.7)

Area restaurants may soon find it a tad easier to pursue a piece of the lucrative corporate event market.

GOPPhilly.com, an independent guide to last years Republican National Convention, has evolved into ez-Event.com, an on-line marketplace that links corporate-event planners with restaurants and is set to launch April 15.

The company calls ez-Event a "reverse auction." Meeting planners can enter space, menu, and pricing requirements and be presented with a list of only those restaurants that meet the specifications. The planners then send their requests for proposals to all the restaurants simultaneously. Planners pick one and put down a credit-card deposit.

According to Greg Truitt, CEO of ez-Event, the database contains more than 100 restaurants so far "including many of Philadelphia's established corporate-event hosts like Susanna Foo and Striped Bass."

Susanna Foo in Center City was one of the restaurants that participated in the testing phase of the product, during which about 85 events were booked.

"It's nice because it allows the planners to get information from different places at once, and see what they want online and make their decision. They get a lot at the click of a button," said Debbie Heth, catering manager at Susanna Foo. "For us it's just another avenue so they can see what we have and it can bring people to us that wouldn't have known about us otherwise. That's more its benefit to us."

Aside from the restaurants, which pay a fee, the company has signed on corporate clients as well, who use the system for free.

So far those clients include TAP Pharmaceuticals, IMS Health, and meeting planning firms McGettigan Partners and Gray Consulting Inc. Scott Gray, founder of Gray Consulting, sits on ez-Event's Advisory Board.

Dana Cronin, a meeting planner with Gray Consulting International Meetings and Incentives, calls ez-Event a "wonderful asset. (The software) is beneficial for both parties. Restaurants are not on a 9-to-5 schedule. Their 2 in the morning is like 5 p.m. for us," Cronin said, adding that even when corporate offices are closed, the restaurants can respond.

"We serve a lot of pharmaceutical companies and they do a lot of dinner meetings. People don't realize it takes a lot of planning," Cronin said. With the new system, "you put in what you need, and have a response in 24 hours."

ez-Event has restaurants in New York City, South Jersey and Wilmington in its database as well as Philadelphia

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establishments, and aims to expand to Washington, D.C., followed by Baltimore and Boston,

Eventually, Truitt and his partners want to go national. The company is targeting the financial and consulting industries as well as pharmaceutical. It's business plan states that these three sectors spend about \$10 billion per year on client entertainment and education programs.

Expansion to other regions depends on financing. Thus far the company has raised about \$500,000 from a variety of private investors and has just opened a second round of funding, to augment the revenues from the restaurants.

"We're doing pretty well with the restaurant sales," Truitt said. "Restaurants pay us \$500 quarterly. That covers the development costs and keeps the lights on in Manayunk.

"If we can raise a half a million it will allow us to roll this out and get the East Coast geography," Truitt said. "Our biggest concern is the support (personnel). Once it goes live and (corporations) start planning there will be calls. We need to beef-up by about four full-time employees."

Truitt plans to hire event planners and technical people to add to the seven employees the company now has. Most o the technical work is outsourced to World Wide Web Communications in Cherry Hill.

Cronin said she would love to see ez-Event rolled out to more obscure regions where she often has occasion to plan meetings for pharmaceutical clients.

"Do you know how hard it is to find a restaurant in Paducah, Ky.?" She said

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